



A District Branch of the American Psychiatric Association

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Representative Stahl and Members of the Family and Children's Services Committee:

My name is Kathleen Gross, I am the Executive Director of the Michigan Psychiatric Society, a branch of the American Psychiatric Association. MPS represents 800 physicians in Michigan who specialize in psychiatry and who work in both public and private settings.

While MPS is supportive of the goal of House Bill 5702, which is to encourage healthy marriages by increasing access and visibility of clergy who provide guidance or courses on marriage. The bill would also clarify the acceptability of voluntary contributions for these no-fee services.

However, the bill, on page 2, lines 7 and 8 inserts the word "INDIVIDUAL" within the scope of practice of Marriage and Family Therapists. We are concerned that this is a scope of practice expansion that does not fit with the purpose of this bill.

Marriage and Family Therapists are seeking an expansion of their scope of practice to include the treatment of individuals with mental illness. We do not feel that the training of Marriage and Family Therapists is sufficient in the arena of mental illness, and the public is not well served or protected by such an expansion. There is a great need for Marriage and Family Therapists to apply their skills to relational issues, and we are supportive of their field of study, their practice, and the worthiness of insurance coverage for their services. If there is a need for a change to their scope of practice, it should be addressed through the Health Policy Committees, and in fact, there is a bill, SB 489, that does address their legislative agenda.

The Michigan Psychiatric Society would endorse an amended HB 5702.